



Victorian Burns  
Prevention Partnership

A partnership of:



# Stay Safe

Burns Prevention Newsletter

2010 | Issue 2

## Welcome

One of the aims of the Victorian Burns Prevention Partnership is to reduce the number of burns and scald injuries this winter. With low temperatures upon us, Victorians turn on heaters, sleep with hot water bottles and electric blankets, and are more likely to be consuming soups and hot drinks. These all help to keep us warm, but they also increase the risk of burns and scalds. Young children are more at risk of these injuries as they lack the ability to assess risks and avoid dangers. In this issue of *Stay Safe* we publish a warning from the fire agencies, an update on novelty lighters, and information on minimising burns and scalds from hot water bottles and hot drinks. In the first four months of 2010 (summer–autumn) at least 15 children required admission to The Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne due to scald burns from tea or coffee. Burns and scalds can be one of the most devastating injuries a child can suffer and can result in life long scarring, with many sufferers requiring long hospital stays and multiple treatments. Every effort should be made to keep our children safe from burns and scalds.



### ATTENTION... THE KEY INGREDIENT FOR A SAFE KITCHEN



homefiresafety.com.au

**The single biggest cause of house fires is distraction in the kitchen.**

So while it's tempting to pop into the lounge to watch TV, answer the phone or deal with the kids, remember – kitchen fires start when your attention stops. And please – make sure you have a working smoke alarm.

Visit [homefiresafety.com.au](http://homefiresafety.com.au) to be home fire safe this winter.



## Do not leave cooking unattended



MFB Leading Firefighter Lorne Tieman with CFA firefighters Tim Isermann and Lieutenant Mark Hatton in the hotspots kitchen with Hotel Windsor Executive Chef Jérôme Trémoulet

CFA and MFB came together for the commencement of winter to launch their annual winter fire safety campaign—but this time it wasn't only firefighters delivering the message.

With 30 per cent of house fires starting in the kitchen firefighters were joined by Hotel Windsor Executive Chef Jérôme Trémoulet to spread the message that 'kitchen fires start when your attention stops'. Mr Trémoulet said loss of concentration in the kitchen could be a recipe for disaster. A series of advertisements highlighting this important message is being aired on radio and television during winter.

MFB CEO and Chief Officer Graham Fountain said that more house fires start in kitchens than in any other room of the house.

"As a former chef and a firefighter for over 20 years, I know how easily a kitchen fire can start, causing damage to your home, injuries and even death," he said. "The most tragic part is that most of these fires could be easily avoided."

"Fat or cooking oil can reach a temperature where it ignites; so it is important that you are always watching it. Never leave cooking unattended, even for a moment."

CFA Director Community Safety Lisa Sturzenegger said kitchen fires were still the single biggest cause of house fires in Victoria.

"Fire agencies responded to 1245 house fires in Victoria. Of those, 30 per cent started in the kitchen," she said.

"Having a working smoke alarm and a well practised home fire escape plan is one of the best ways to ensure you and your family's safety."

For a winter home fire safety checklist, visit [www.homefiresafety.com.au](http://www.homefiresafety.com.au).

## IN THIS ISSUE

Welcome	1
Do not leave cooking unattended	1
Hot drink scalds	2
Hot water bottle safety	3
Warning: novelty lighters	3
Children learn through play	3
Choosing safe clothing for children	4

# Hot drink scalds

Scalds are injuries caused by contact with hot water, such as from a hot drink, bath, kettle or saucepan. Scalds are the most common type of burn injury among children. They mainly occur in the 6–18 month age group. However, preschool children (under 5 years of age) are at greatest risk—with boys at slightly higher risk than girls. The relatively small body area (especially when hot liquids are involved), the more sensitive nature of young children's skin, and their low position in relation to hot objects (i.e. usually at floor level), means that young children are particularly at risk of suffering severe injuries when involved in scalds or burn injuries.

**It is important that families are aware of the correct action to take if a child in their care suffers a burn/scald—the most important action being to immediately immerse the complete burn area under cold running water for 20 minutes. No ice, no creams. This action alone can reduce the severity of the burn.**

Most of the scalds in preschool children occur through incidents with cups of tea and coffee. It may be that the child reaches up and pulls a mug or cup off a bench or table onto themselves, they may be sitting on an adult's lap whilst they are having a hot drink and they reach out to grab the cup, or they may run into someone carrying a hot drink.

These types of incidents most commonly cause injury to the face, neck and chest. The children require dressing changes for a number of weeks until healing occurs. The dressing changes are very distressing for both the child and the parents. Many of the children will require surgery for skin grafts to allow healing of the burn to occur.

In the first four months of 2010 at least 15 children required admission to The Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne due to scald burns from tea or coffee. Another 35 were treated in the burns clinic.

Adults need to always be vigilant with hot drinks when children are around.



*Cook top guards can protect children from dangerous spills*



*Immediate application of cold running water for 20 minutes can reduce the severity of a burn*

## Measures to help prevent hot drink scalds occurring include:

Try and keep toddlers occupied and out of harm's way when cooking. Teach toddlers not to play in the kitchen. If possible they should be kept safely out of the kitchen during meal preparation and when cooking or making hot drinks (otherwise use safety gates or put very small children into a playpen or highchair, but not in a baby walker).

Place kettles and teapots on back burners on the stove and only boil enough water for your immediate needs and empty the kettle immediately after use. Do not leave kettles and teapots for toddlers to reach. Ensure cords are not hanging down and that the cord is as short as practical. Use a curly cord or a cordless kettle or use a food bag tie to shorten long leads.

Place cups/mugs, containing hot drinks such as tea and coffee, in the centre of the table or at the back of the kitchen bench.

Always keep hot drinks out of reach of toddlers.

Never carry or hold a young child in your arms or on your lap when you are consuming, pouring or carrying a cup/mug of hot drink or when carrying a teapot or coffeepot. The child may turn suddenly, knocking the cup out of your hands and be scalded. You cannot hold both safely.

Put the child in a playpen, before you have a cup of coffee.

When children are young use placemats—do not use a tablecloth. Small children can easily pull a tablecloth, causing items such as cups, mugs and teapots to fall on them.

Do not place hot pans where children have access to them, e.g. on the floor (this is thought to be common practice in some cultures who sit on the floor for family meal times).

Use spill proof cups.

Use electric bottle warmers for heating baby feeding bottles and food.

**For a home safety checklist please visit [www.rch.org.au/safetycentre](http://www.rch.org.au/safetycentre)**





# Choosing safe clothing for children

Parents are encouraged to check the flammability rating on children's nightwear before buying any nightclothes.

The type of fabric used in children's clothing is important. For example, cotton is cool and comfortable, but it is also one of the most flammable fabrics. It needs to be used with care.

When buying children's nightwear, there will always be a fire warning label attached. These warning labels are compulsory on all children's nightwear (and to limited extent, on daywear).

The warnings have helped to dramatically reduce the number of children who are burned while wearing nightclothes.

Fabric warnings help guide consumers to the type of clothing which should be worn in different situations.

Parents should take care and dress children in close-fitting clothes with low fire danger warnings when around barbecues or heaters. Loose-fitting and oversized garments are more likely to come into contact with a heating source or flame and are therefore more hazardous.

Clothing made from pure cotton can easily ignite if it is too close to a heater. Parents are encouraged to check the flammability rating on children's nightwear before purchasing.

## What are the hazards?

Children do not recognise the hazard or danger of being near open flames such as candles, stove tops, heaters and fireplaces.

Children can suffer severe burns or death if the clothing they are wearing catches fire. This can occur when children get too close to, or come into contact with, a naked flame such as a fireplace, heater, stove top, candle or the elements of a radiant heater.

The danger increases during the cooler months when children might stand near heating sources for warmth.

The risk of severe burns is greater in the early morning and evening when children are wearing nightwear.

## Prevention

- Keep children at least one metre away from heaters and other sources of heat.
- Keep children away from naked flames such as candles, fireplaces and gas stoves.
- Where possible, use fire guards or screens to shield children from all sources of naked flame and other heat sources such as radiators or gas heaters. (ACCC, 2010)



# Children's night clothes

## What to look for:

### Safety label AS/NZS 1249:2003

Check the fire danger labelling on your children's clothes, especially nightwear. There is a mandatory standard covering children's nightwear which includes a range of requirements, such as labelling. For more information about the requirements of this mandatory standard, visit [www.productsafety.gov.au](http://www.productsafety.gov.au) and search for "nightwear."



## Children's nightwear includes

- Pyjamas
- Pyjama-style over garments
- Nightdresses
- Nightshirts
- Dressing gowns
- Bathrobes
- Infant sleep bags
- Other items styled and recognised as nightwear
- Knitted all-in-ones, sizes 00–2, of style, made from fabrics with a mass less than 280g/m<sup>2</sup>
- Knitted all-in-ones, sizes 2 and over, of a style which identifies them as nightwear
- Woven all-in-ones, of a style which identifies as nightwear
- Loose boxer shorts

For more product safety tips, and to find out how to make safe, buy safe and use safe, visit [www.productsafety.gov.au](http://www.productsafety.gov.au)

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